

# Ethics Topics in Geriatric and Long Term Care

*Michael A. Gillette, Ph.D.*

Bioethical Services of Virginia, Inc.

## **Ethics in Long Term Care**

Description: This highly interactive, case-based ethics seminar will begin with an introduction to key strategies for identifying, analyzing and resolving ethical issues as they arise in the clinical setting. We will review some of the most interesting and difficult ethical issues that emerge in the provision of long term care services including concepts of autonomy, family control and professional responsibility. We will concentrate on the ethical implications of disagreement among staff, family and resident surrounding medication management and the refusal of indicated clinical services.

Objectives:

1. To provide a practical process for ethical decision making in the clinical setting.
2. To review the concepts of autonomy, paternalism, and distributive justice.
3. To clarify possible responses to the multi-faceted ethical conflict between an individual's right to make potentially dangerous decisions, a family's desire to control services, and staff's obligation to protect individuals from harm.

## **The Ethics of Dealing with Dementia**

Description: This highly interactive session will provide attendees with an introduction to the process of practical ethical decision making, especially as it applies to situations involving individuals with memory impairment. We will begin with a careful analysis of a pragmatic approach to identifying, analyzing and resolving clinical ethics issues. We will then move on to discuss a series of case studies that involve individuals with dementia. Through case analysis, we will study issues of autonomy, paternalism, and the management of conflicts among providers, recipients of care and family members.

Objectives:

1. To examine the concept of individual autonomy specifically as it relates to individuals suffering with dementia.
2. To investigate the ethical justification for interventions over an individual's objections that are designed to protect the individual from harm.
3. To provide an ethical framework for adjudicating disagreements between providers and family members.

## **The Ethics of Capacity**

Description: This highly interactive session will provide attendees with an opportunity to discuss a variety of ethical issues related to an individual's capacity to make his or her own self directing choices. Although capacity is most often considered when serious healthcare decisions are made, we will examine the role of substitute decision makers in a variety of scenarios.

Objectives:

1. To examine the concept of capacity and to define the ethical values that surround it.
2. To investigate the relationship between capacity and the dignity of risk.
3. To provide an ethical framework for adjudicating disagreements among individuals, their family members and providers.

## **The Ethics of Gender, Sex and Sexuality**

Description: This highly interactive session will review a series of ethical issues surrounding gender, sex and sexuality. We will discuss ethical concepts and study specific case studies involving topics such as placement issues, truthfulness issues, autonomy issues, staff member's personal values and comfort, and new challenges presented by recent legal changes regarding same sex couples.

Objectives:

1. To discuss the ethical implications posed by services that are offered to LGBTQ clients.
2. To examine the ethical demands that are placed on the provider-recipient relationship when dealing with sexuality.
3. To consider the ethics of sexuality activity as it relates to mental health/long term care services.

## **The Impact of Personal Values on Serving Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities**

This interactive, case-based seminar will explore ethical issues that emerge when the personal values of providers come into conflict with the needs and desires of individuals served. We will review information concerning staff refusal to partake in objectionable activity, staff desire to protect individuals from harm, and disagreements between providers and family members.

Objectives:

1. To define the conditions under which staff members may ethically refuse to engage in objectionable activities and when they must engage in objectionable activities regardless of personal values.
2. Define and apply the concept of ethically justifiable paternalism.
3. To consider the impact of person centered planning on relevant issues.

## **Beyond the Video Conference: Ethical Issues in the Transformation of Provider-Recipient Interaction**

**Description:** This highly interactive session will consider a series of ethical issues that are currently emerging as modes of communication and service provision change to embrace therapeutic encounters between physically separated individuals. We will examine a variety of ethical issues beginning with simple matters such as safety, licensing and billing, but then delve more deeply into the ethical implications of fundamental changes in how people communicate and interact. We will discuss boundary issues and social media and consider how acceptance of new modes of relationship building may impact clinical interactions.

## **The Ethics of Social Networking and Electronic Communication**

**Description:** This highly interactive seminar will consider a series of ethical issues that emerge when clients and providers communicate by electronic means and engage social networking technologies. We will examine this topic as it relates to considerations of provider-recipient trust, boundaries, confidentiality and responsiveness. In attending this session, participants will have the opportunity to analyze the impact of modern communication and record keeping technologies on ethical assumptions.

**Objectives:**

1. Review basic concepts of confidentiality and apply those concepts to new information and documentation technologies.
2. Define the concept of inappropriate dual relationships and apply that concept to social networking interactions.
3. Identify conditions under which breaches of confidentiality are ethically permissible or obligatory.
4. Examine ethical issues associated with new systems of clinical record keeping and client access.

## **Conflict and Control: The Ethics of Managing Life Limiting Illness**

Description: This highly interactive session will provide a discussion of ethical issues that develop when providers, patients and family members must make decisions about the plan of care and goals of treatment for individuals with life limiting illnesses. We will consider capacity issues and surrogate decision making, the relationship between a patient's previously stated wishes and the family's choices about end of life care, and the role of provider's personal values when educating patients about their options. This session will combine a review of law and policy with discussion of case studies.

Objectives:

1. To review basic state law regarding capacity and surrogate decision making.
2. To define the ethical limitations on surrogate decision making.
3. To examine the ethical implications of concepts such as quality of life, palliative care and futility.

## **Professional Boundaries and Nursing Ethics**

Description: This highly interactive, case-based seminar will present an overview of ethical issues that develop when providers and recipients fail to recognize professional boundaries. By examining actual case consultations, we will explore key concepts and generate a better understanding of the relationship between healthcare personnel and the individuals whom they serve.

Objectives:

1. To define professional boundaries and dual relationships in an ethically useful way.
2. To explore difficult cases where boundary crossings are difficult to identify or avoid.
3. To demonstrate tools and policies that can be of use in avoiding inappropriate boundary crossings.

## **Autonomy, Paternalism and the Limits of Staff Responsibility**

Description: This highly interactive session will examine the concepts of autonomy and paternalism. We will discuss the appropriate role of autonomy and define its limits. We will consider case studies in which individual autonomy should be respected and cases in which paternalistic intervention is justified. This session will be highly interactive, combining a didactic presentation of material with discussion of case studies.

Objectives:

1. To review the concepts of autonomy and paternalism.
2. To identify the limits of individual choice in order to protect those individuals from self-generated harm.
3. To determine the proper balance between staff responsibility for health and safety and the proper role of individual decision making in a system that embraces concepts of person centered planning and recovery.

## **Autonomy and Paternalism: The Ethics of Respecting Resident Choice**

Description: This highly interactive session will examine the ethical balance between respecting individual choice and protecting individuals from harm. We will consider the appropriate limits on autonomy and the rights of individuals to make dangerous or unwise decisions.

Objectives:

1. To define and apply the concept of ethically justifiable paternalism.
2. To examine the ethical force of autonomy and its limits.
3. To examine the legitimate role of providers to minimize or mitigate risk.
4. To discuss specific case studies that arise in relevant areas.

## **Leadership Ethics and Moral Management**

Description: This highly interactive session will provide an introduction to leadership and business ethics issues. After discussing basic concepts of leadership ethics, and reviewing the most common sources of ethical confusion, we will review strategies for creating an organizational environment of ethics.

Objectives:

1. To examine the source of ethical obligation within an organizational structure.
2. To review the process by which leadership ethics issues can be identified, analyzed and resolved.
3. To discuss, specifically, the role of managers within an organizational structure by considering the potential ethical conflicts between duty to the organization and the duty to support supervisees.

## **Budgeting Ethics**

Description: This seminar will provide an introduction to some of the most interesting and difficult ethical issues in the provision of geriatric services in an environment of scarce financial resources. We will demonstrate a practical approach to ethical reasoning that can be applied to a variety of sub-topics including prioritization and micro-allocation, macro-allocation and budgeting across service areas, and ethical issues regarding non-payment and no-shows. This will be a case-based discussion of relevant moral issues.

Objectives:

1. To identify the key ethical values that impact decisions about the distribution of scarce resources
2. To demonstrate a practical algorithm for making allocation decisions
3. To define the ethical implications of individual choice and responsibility

## **Working Together for Ethical Outcomes**

Description: This interactive session will examine ethical challenges in long-term care and hospice that generate different responses from distinct areas of service and points of view. We will discuss case studies from actual ethics consults in order to develop the tools necessary to identify, analyze and resolve ethical dispute and confusion.

Objectives:

1. To review a pragmatic approach to moral reasoning in real practice situations.
2. To identify the appropriate impact of personal and professional points of view in analyzing ethical issues.
3. To demonstrate how a healthy interdisciplinary approach, including a person-centered commitment to the values of the individual served, can assist in resolving difficult ethical issues.

## **Ethics and Diet**

Description: This highly interactive session will consider a series of case studies that pertain to nutritional needs and dietary control. We will consider the conditions under which individuals may ethically be restricted in their dietary choices in order to protect them from aspiration, choking and medical problems associated with poor diets. We will also discuss the concept of dignity and risk by exploring the nature of the provider-recipient relationship specifically as it applies to dietitians, nutritionists and speech pathologists.

# **Is Dead Really Dead: The Ethics of Declaring Death by Neurological Criteria**

Description: This interactive session will review two cases that captured national attention when patients were declared dead by neurological criteria. We will review the concept of "brain death" and explore the ethical implications of applying this concept to practical cases.

Objectives:

1. To review federal and state laws regarding the declaration of death.
2. To identify ethical issues that develop when applying neurological criteria of death.
3. To discuss relevant case studies.